

[DATE]

The Honorable Chuck Schumer
United States Senate
322 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Mike Johnson
United States House of Representatives
568 Cannon House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Mitch McConnell
United States Senate
317 Russell Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Hakeem Jeffries
United States House of Representatives
2433 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

RE: Inclusion of Social Isolation and Loneliness Language in the Final 2024 Reauthorization of the Older Americans Act

Dear Majority Leader Schumer, Minority Leader McConnell, Speaker Johnson, and Minority Leader Jeffries:

As an active member of [ORGANIZATION NAME] and a proud supporter of the Coalition to End Social Isolation & Loneliness (CESIL), I am writing to express my deep gratitude for Congress's timely efforts to reauthorize the Older Americans Act (OAA). It is heartening to see the commitment to enhancing the independence, well-being, and health of older adults, people with disabilities, and their families and caregivers. The OAA provides a critical opportunity to support community-based organizations in addressing the widespread public health issue of social isolation and loneliness among older adults in the United States.

As Congress continues its work on crucial bipartisan legislation to strengthen and modernize services for older Americans, I urge you to consider the inclusion of additional provisions aimed at improving and scaling services that combat the harmful health effects of social isolation and loneliness while fostering social connection.

[Add a personal statement about your involvement with the organization, how social isolation and loneliness have impacted you, and why you support the OAA.]

It is alarming that nearly half of older adults feel isolated, alone, or left out.¹ Studies indicate that anywhere from 25 to 45 percent of the total U.S. population were socially isolated or lonely, or both, even before the COVID-19 pandemic.^{2, 3, 4} Research from Brigham Young University highlights that social

¹ G. Anderson and C. Thayer, AARP Research. Social Isolation: Myths vs. Realities Among Older Adults Age 40 and Over. 2018.

² Kaiser Family Foundation. Loneliness and Social Isolation in the United States, the United Kingdom, and Japan: An International Survey. 2018. <http://files.kff.org/attachment/Report-Loneliness-and-Social-Isolation-in-the-United-States-the-United-Kingdom-and-Japan-An-International-Survey>

³ National Academies of Sciences, Medicine, and Engineering. The Health and Medical Dimensions of Social Isolation and Loneliness in Older Adults. 2020. <https://www.nap.edu/resource/25663/Social%20Isolation%20and%20Loneliness%20Report%20Highlights.pdf>

⁴ CIGNA. "U.S. Loneliness Index: Survey of 20,000 Americans Surveying Behaviors Driving Loneliness in the United States." 2018. <https://www.cigna.com/assets/docs/newsroom/loneliness-survey-2018-full-report.pdf>

isolation and loneliness are linked to a 29 percent and 26 percent increased risk of mortality, respectively, similar to the risks associated with obesity and cigarette smoking.⁵ In addition to the negative health impacts, it is estimated that Medicare spends \$6.7 billion annually due to the consequences of social isolation.⁶ These troubling realities have led U.S. Surgeon General Murthy to label social isolation and loneliness as an epidemic that threatens both individual and societal health.⁷ Similarly, the World Health Organization has launched a Commission on Social Connection, underscoring the global significance of addressing social isolation and loneliness to improve mental and physical well-being.⁸

Given the gravity of this issue, I am particularly appreciative of the leadership shown in including essential provisions to address social isolation and loneliness in the Senate Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions (HELP) Committee's Older Americans Act Reauthorization Act of 2024. These provisions have the potential to greatly improve the quality of life for older adults and conserve valuable resources. I strongly support the inclusion of these and other vital provisions to help the millions of Americans affected by social isolation and chronic loneliness.

In addition, I encourage Congress to provide increased funding authorizations to enable the Aging Network to meet the growing needs of our rapidly aging population. Significantly higher levels of funding are essential across all OAA programs to continue delivering the high-quality services already authorized. Additional investments are needed to further strengthen Area Agencies on Aging, community-based organizations, and other Aging Network partners in their efforts to reduce social isolation and loneliness among older adults and caregivers.

[Tailor the letter with your additional recommendations, that reflect your personal priorities, or those of your organization.]

Overall, I commend your leadership in creating bipartisan legislation that enhances the efficiency and effectiveness of OAA services and programs. I applaud your work on the reauthorization of the Older Americans Act and look forward to supporting a final bill that includes these critical provisions. If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact me at [Your Contact Information].

Sincerely,

[Your Name]

[Your Signature]

⁵ J. Holt-Lundstad, et. al. Loneliness and Social Isolation as Risk Factors for Mortality: A Meta-Analytic Review. 2016.

⁶ AARP Public Policy Institute. Medicare Spends More on Socially Isolated Older Adults. 2017.

⁷ U.S. Surgeon General. "New Surgeon General Advisory Raises Alarm about the Devastating Impact of the Epidemic of Loneliness and Isolation in the United States." May 3, 2023.

⁸ World Health Organization. WHO Commission on Social Connection. 2023. <https://www.who.int/groups/commission-on-social-connection>